

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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FM AMEMBASSY BONN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9783

INFO AMEMBASSY BERLIN

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

USMISSION NATO BRUSSELS

USMISSION USBERLIN

AMCONSUL BREMEN

AMCONSUL DUSSELDORF

AMCONSUL FRANKFURT

AMCONSUL HAMBURG

AMCONSUL MUNICH

AMCONSUL STUTTGART

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, PFOR, GW

SUBJECT: GERMAN VIEW OF THE UNITED STATES IN THE

WAKE OF SOUTH EAST ASIAN DEVELOPMENTS

REF: BONN 5764, BONN 5867, BONN 7021

BEGIN SUMMARY: GERMAN POLITICIANS (MOST RECENTLY CDU
FOREIGN POLICY SPOKESMAN KIEP AND DEFENSE MINISTER
LEBER) CONTINUE TO STATE PUBLICLY THAT DEVELOPMENTS IN
SOUTH EAST ASIA HAVE NOT REDUCED THEIR CONFIDENCE IN THE
AMERICAN COMMITMENT TO THE ATLANTIC ALLIANCE. THERE ARE
NO SIGNS THAT THE WEST GERMANS ARE UNDERGOING AN AGO-
NIZING REAPPRAISAL" OF THE VALUE OF THE ATLANTIC ALLI-
ANCE WHICH REMAINS THE KEYSTONE OF FRG FOREIGN AND
SECURITY POLICY. THEY ARE, HOWEVER, CAREFULLY WATCHING
POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS IN THE UNITED STATES FOR SIGNS OF
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NEO-ISOLATIONISM. RECENT EVENTS IN SOUTH EAST ASIA,

COMBINED WITH OTHER UNSETTLING INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENTS, HAVE CREATED AN UNDERLYING SENSE OF INSECURITY IN THE GERMAN PUBLIC WHICH IS REFLECTED IN THE PRIVATE COMMENTS OF WEST GERMAN POLITICIANS. THE PARTICIPATION OF THE PRESIDENT IN THE NATO SUMMIT ISWELCOMED BY THE WEST GERMANS AS A SYMBOL OF THE CENTRAL ROLE EUROPE PLAYS IN US FOREIGN POLICY. END SUMMARY

1. IT IS STILL TOO EARLY TO DISCERN THE FULL IMPACT OF RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IN SOUTH EAST ASIA ON THE WEST GERMANS' VIEW OF THE US (SEE BONN 7021 FOR PRESS REACTION). RESPONSIBLE GERMAN POLITICIANS CONTINUE TO EXPRESS CONFIDENCE IN THE US COMMITMENT TO THE ALLIANCE. CDU FOREIGN POLICY SPOKESMAN WALTHER LEISLER KIEP RECENTLY TOLD A RADIO INTERVIEWER THAT "I FIND IT ALMOST PARADOXICAL TO DOUBT THE LOYALTY OF THE UNITED STATES ON THE OCCASION OF THE FINAL ACT OF THE VIETNAM TRAGEDY... THERE EXISTS NO THIRD WAY FOR THE US WITHOUT EUROPE AND NO THIRD WAY FOR EUROPE WITHOUT THE US. WE MUST STRESS THAT NOW AND GIVE THE AMERICAN ALLY A SMALL SIGN OF SOLIDARITY AND SYMPATHY IN THE DIFFICULT TIMES AMERICA IS FACING NOW."

2. SPD DEFENSE MINISTER LEBER, WHOSE NEWSPAPER ARTICLE IN SUPPORT OF THE US ROLE IN SOUTH EAST ASIA (BONN 5867) CREATED A STIR IN THE PARTY, TOLD AN INTERVIEWER THAT HE BELIEVED US DISENGAGEMENT FROM VIETNAM WILL LEAD TO AN EVEN CLOSER ALLIANCE BETWEEN THE US AND EUROPE. EDITOR THEO SOMMER, WRITING IN "DIE ZEIT," REFLECTED A WIDE HELD VIEW THAT SETBACKS IN SOUTH EAST ASIA HAVE NOT REDUCED AMERICAN COMMITMENT TO EUROPE.

3. ALL THIS SAID, THE DAILY TV AND PRESS COVERAGE OF THE AMERICAN EVACUATION FROM CAMBODIA AND VIETNAM IS BOUND TO HAVE HAD A NEGATIVE IMPACT ON WEST GERMAN PUBLIC OPINION. JUST AS TELEVISION BROUGHT THE HORROR OF THE WAR INTO WEST GERMAN LIVING ROOMS, THE HUMAN TRAGEDY UNFOLDING DURING THE LAST DAYS OF SAIGON HAS BEEN DAILY FARE FOR THE GERMAN TV VIEWER. IT MUST BE ASSUMED THAT THIS EXPERIENCE HAS FED A FEELING OF DISQUIET AND CONFUSION

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ABOUT THE FUTURE.

4. THE LATEST DEVELOPMENTS IN SOUTH EAST ASIA COMING AS THEY DID ON TOP OF A SERIES OF NEGATIVE INTERNATIONAL POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS (THE GREEK-TURKISH DISPUTE, EVENTS IN PORTUGAL, THE MIDDLE EAST SITUATION) HAVE CREATED INSECURITIES HERE THAT ARE VOICED BY POLITICIANS

IN PRIVATE. FACED WITH WHAT THEY SEE AS A DETERIORATING INTERNATIONAL SITUATION, WEST GERMAN POLITICIANS EXPRESS PARTICULAR CONCERN ABOUT THE DISPUTE BETWEEN THE EXECUTIVE BRANCH AND CONGRESS ON FOREIGN POLICY ISSUES WHICH THEY FEAR REFLECTS A SHIFT ON THE PART OF AMERICAN PUBLIC

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OPINION TOWARDS NEO-ISOLATIONISM. THEY WORRY THAT A CHANGE IN US PUBLIC OPINION AWAY FROM A WILLINGNESS TO ACCEPT GLOBAL RESPONSIBILITIES MIGHT AFFECT SUCH THINGS AS AMERICAN TROOP LEVELS IN THE FRG.

5. THIS IS NOT TO SAY THAT THE WEST GERMANS ARE UNDERGOING AN AGONIZING REAPPRAISAL OF THEIR COMMITMENT TO THE ATLANTIC ALLIANCE WHICH REMAINS THE KEYSTONE OF

WEST GERMAN SECURITY POLICY. THERE IS, HOWEVER, SOME CONCERN ABOUT WHERE AMERICA IS HEADED IN THE WAKE OF VIETNAM. POSSIBLE NEGATIVE IMPLICATIONS OF VIETNAM ARE VOICED MORE OFTEN BY CDU/CSU POLITICIANS THAN THEIR SPD COUNTERPARTS. THIS REFLECTS THE FACT THAT MANY SPD POLITICIANS ARE RELIEVED TO SEE THE AMERICAN ENGAGEMENT IN VIETNAM, WHICH THEY WERE NEVER ENTHUSIASTIC ABOUT

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IN THE FIRST PLACE, COME TO AN END.

6. WEST GERMAN POLITICIANS OF ALL THREE MAJOR PARTIES WILL BE WATCHING DEVELOPMENTS IN THE US AS WELL AS US GOVERNMENT STATEMENTS AND ACTIONS FOR ANY INDICATION THAT WE ARE TURNING INWARDS. IN THIS REGARD THEY WELCOME THE PARTICIPATION OF THE PRESIDENT IN THE FORTHCOMING NATO SUMMIT AS A SYMBOL OF THE CENTRAL ROLE EUROPE PLAYS IN US FOREIGN POLICY.

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